

Witness Statement by Professor Michael Leach

1. My name is Michael Leach and my work address is at .
2. I am a Professor in Politics and International Relations as well as occupying the management role of Chair of the Department of Education and Social Sciences at Swinburne University of Technology (“Swinburne”), supervising around 40 ongoing and fixed term salaried academic staff, as well as somewhere between 50 and 100 hourly paid academic staff. I teach in Comparative Politics, and the Politics of the Pacific. My research work and publications include nation-building in the Asia-Pacific, the politics of Timor-Leste, the politics of Melanesian & Pacific nations, and comparative immigration and asylum policy. I gained a PhD in Politics at the University of Queensland in 2002.
3. I am also an Australian legal practitioner, and officer of the Supreme Court of Victoria.
4. My main relevant work history as an academic has been as follows:
 - Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor of Politics, Swinburne University of Technology, from 2008 to the present time.
 - Associate Lecturer, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in politics at Deakin University, from 2001 to 2008.
 - Hourly paid academic staff member at the University of Queensland, from 1990 to 1997
 - Hourly paid academic staff member at South Thames College in London from 1994 to 1995.
5. My movement through the classification structure from Level A (Associate Lecturer) to Level B (Lecturer), Level C (Senior Lecturer), Level D (Associate Professor) and now to Professor (Level E) has been entirely by academic promotion.
6. At Deakin University I was also for several years a senior officer of the Deakin University Branch of the NTEU, responsible for pursuing the Union’s policies and objectives within that university.

7. In this statement, unless I state otherwise, when I speak about academic working time, workloads, workload allocation and like terms, I am referring to salaried continuing and fixed term staff, and not to the large number of hourly paid, or “casual” academic staff.
8. As a former office-bearer of the NTEU, and more particularly in my management role as Department Chair, I have developed an intimate practical understanding of issues concerning academic working hours and workload. This understanding is in relation to a large number of individual academic staff and their concerns, to groups of academics within a work area trying to allocate work fairly or efficiently, and to the systematic attempts by management at the institutional level and at the level of an academic organisational unit to allocate required work to academic staff within tight resource constraints to achieve the objectives and academic mission of the university.

Teaching, Research, Service, Administration, Higher Degree Supervision, Scholarship and Discipline Currency

9. In my roles as an academic, as an academic manager, as an NTEU Branch President and also as a PhD candidate, and through contact with very many staff at universities across Australia, I have been able to gain an understanding of academic work in many contexts and in most circumstances. On that basis I can say with certainty to this Commission that the following is true:
10. The large majority of academic staff have responsibilities which include preparing, conducting and assessing classes of students undertaking units of study for an undergraduate degree or diploma or postgraduate degree or diploma. This is generally described as **Teaching**. More broadly, and without being exhaustive, **Teaching** or sometimes **teaching-related duties** are generally taken to include the design of units of study or whole courses of study, including for delivery on-line, the assessment, moderation and transmission of student results, consultation with students to assist them in their work, and policing student academic conduct.
11. A large majority of academic employees have responsibilities which include **research**. Research may be distinguished from scholarship (see further below) in that in a university context, to be **research** there has to be some identifiable **research output** which attempts to advance some aspect of knowledge within an academic discipline. The most common forms of this are peer-reviewed articles in journals, chapters in books, a book, peer-reviewed conference papers or a

PhD thesis. In some disciplines, these research outputs may also be associated with some direct product, such as a new drug treatment or new engineering method. The production of these research outputs, and especially in the sciences and social sciences, the collection of the data and information on which knowledge is built, can be considered the core of **research work**. However, in the context of understanding workloads of academics, research work would generally be taken as including applying for research grants (a very time consuming task) and may include supervision of PhD or other research students (see further below).

12. In addition to teaching and research, **scholarship** is an important activity which is necessary to the performance of those two functions in an efficient manner. Scholarship most commonly consists of the reading of academic works and participating in conferences or other meetings within a discipline, and in some disciplines also engaging with popular media or culture, reading government reports or court decisions, in order to maintain one's understanding of developments and changes in the discipline or, just as importantly, developments in the pedagogy of the discipline. This is sometimes described as maintaining currency in one's discipline, and is distinct from the specific preparation of a lecture or tutorial. For example, in my discipline, it includes reading policy and political news and updates from regional countries, including parliamentary senate submissions, policy debates and reports. Those academics who have a teaching-only or teaching-focussed role do no or little research, and therefore do not have the same access to the latest developments in their discipline through research as other academics should. For this group, scholarship is of even more importance, and of necessity generally takes more time. At a minimum, I would expect a full-time teaching-only academic to be spending more than 5% of his or her time maintaining familiarity with developments in the relevant discipline.

13. A significant part of academic work is generally called **service** or some synonymous term. This can include **community engagement** or outreach, which can take many forms. Examples would include media appearances, organising a discipline-based conference, serving on the board or committee of a learned profession or discipline, engagement with secondary teachers or students, or advocacy work in a field related to one's academic work – for example on behalf of the nuclear industry or refugees. However, the concept of service also applies to certain work done within the institution or the higher education sector generally, which is not part of the academic's own teaching or research effort. Examples of this may include serving on governance or management committees of the institution, such as ethics committees, parking

and facilities committees, graduation ceremony committees, academic boards, or faculty boards. This service might typically be called **university service**. Beyond the confines of the university itself, service might also include **service to the discipline or profession** such as sitting on peer-review committees assessing grant applications on behalf of funding bodies or reviewing proposed publications for journals, or indeed editing a discipline-based journal or serving on its board.

14. Last, but by no means least as a component of academic work, is the work described as **administration**. Put simply this is the range of administrative duties necessary to supporting the other academic activities, and to achieving compliance with corporate and governance responsibilities of the institution. Examples of this include the operation of performance management systems, financial compliance and acquittals, staff selection, participation in the drafting or implementation of administrative or other policies (e.g. intellectual property, health and safety, and equal opportunity). It also includes considerable documenting and reporting on a range of institutional, staff and student indicators. Administration falls most heavily on positions such as mine as a Chair of a Department, and tends to fall more heavily on staff in the higher classification – Levels C, D and E – and less so on staff at Levels A and B. However there would be many exceptions in both directions. There would be a few “research professors” with a small administrative load, and some junior academics with large administrative loads such as that associated with the recruitment and direction of large numbers of casual teaching staff.
15. The terms *teaching, research, scholarship, administration* and *service* are widely recognised, well-understood and widely used in describing academic work across the higher education sector, and are used in work allocation and academic promotion criteria. However, there are two important things which should be said in clarification.
16. First, different terms are used to describe and delineate some of these terms at some universities. For example, at some places a terms like *community service* or *engagement* is used in place of service. At some places, scholarship and research may not be distinguished.
17. Second, there can often be differing opinions or practices about how certain types of work are to be classified. Some examples of this include:

- a. The supervision of students undertaking post-graduate research degrees (most commonly PhDs) in some contexts will be considered *teaching* and in other contexts will be considered *research*.
- b. The co-ordination of a particular course or unit (involving e.g. advising students on prerequisites, engagement and supervision of casual staff, administering student evaluations of teaching, budgeting, and marking moderation) will in different locations be considered *administration* or *teaching*.

However, none of these differences of approach are inconsistent with the overall conceptual framework I have described above.

The working-hours requirements of academic staff within my knowledge

18. Over the period since my appointment as Chair of Department, I estimate with reasonable confidence that my average working week is somewhere in the range of 60 to 65 hours per week. As one might expect, there is a heavy administrative load associated with such a position, not least in relation to consulting with the 40 staff in the Department about their workload allocation and about performance review. I also serve on a number of important committees, such as in relation to Student Progress.
19. There is also a heavy burden upon myself and on other academic staff in relation to administrative work. Over my experience at Deakin University and at Swinburne, I have seen a steady reduction in the provision of local administrative staff. This has increased the time required to be spent by academic staff to carry out a range of functions. For example, in earlier times there were administrative staff available to arrange convenient times for meetings (for example PhD progress committees), expenses claims by academic staff (for example for travel) were processed and submitted by administrative staff, and the bulk of work involved in recruiting and engaging the large number of casual academic staff was undertaken by administrative staff. Now these tasks have to be performed by academic staff themselves, and there has been an associated proliferation of on-line forms, which are often quite cumbersome and time-consuming.
20. From a certain perspective it might be said that my personal working hours (60-65 hours per week) are “self-imposed” in the sense that I choose, as a professor, to try to maintain an effort

in relation to service to the discipline and in research. While this might be considered a “choice” in one sense, being the Chair of a Department is only a term appointment of three years, and I consider it important to maintain my research and service effort, partly out of a sense of duty, and partly because being “out of circulation” from my discipline for an extended period would undoubtedly damage my academic career. Another important change related to this point builds on something mentioned above. I undertake the supervision of students writing their doctoral (PhD) theses. Typically I would have about 8 PhD students under supervision, and I would estimate that over the course of a calendar year the total work associated with supervising one PhD student is around 40 hours. In the sciences and medicine a PhD student is commonly taken on as part of a research project and studies some aspect of that project. The research being undertaken by the supervised PhD student will benefit the research output of the supervising academic, who might also be the chief investigator on the research project. In these circumstances, it is appropriate that PhD supervision be considered part of the academic’s research effort. However, in areas such as the humanities, social sciences and law, the supervision of PhD students is more typically part of the teaching effort, as there is rarely any relationship between the research work of the supervisor and the student’s thesis. This is why, in the past, academics in the humanities, education and social sciences received at Swinburne a discount in their other allocated teaching duties for the supervision of a PhD. Supervision was considered part of an academic’s teaching effort. The University has, for 2016, changed that policy, such that PhD supervision is now considered part of the research work of academic staff in these areas, and no discount in other teaching obligations is allowed. There has been no downward revision of other workload requirements. This is a good example of how the workload allocations, and therefore working hours, of academic staff can be increased by fiat by the management of the university.

21. I should preface what I am about to say by acknowledging that academic staff retain control, subject to collegial discussions, of the content of their teaching - an important aspect of academic freedom, which is a defining characteristic of a university. Nevertheless, within my areas of experience at Deakin and Swinburne, there has been a gradual but significant increase in workload, and consequently working time, associated with several aspects of teaching. These include:

- a. Increased work associated with student evaluation of teaching;

- b. Re-accreditation of units and courses. In previous times this was done centrally, but now requires a significant amount of time spent by the academic in form-filling and meeting strict deadlines;
- c. The need for unit (subject) guides to comply with fairly detailed models and rubrics, such as around assessment and content.

None of these requirements do I necessarily consider unreasonable, but they have probably increased the work required of the average full-time academic by an hour or two each week over the year.

22. I am well-placed to comment on the workload requirements of the 40 non-casual academic staff in my Department. I am their supervisor, I am responsible for their workload allocation and performance review. I can make a sound estimate of the likely working hours of the academic staff under my supervision, based upon my own experience as an academic in each of the classification levels and based upon my knowledge arising from discussions with them in workload allocation and performance review. That estimate is that all or almost all of the full-time academic staff I supervise would have working hours within the range of 45 to 55 hours each week. I am well qualified to make this estimate because I do take active measures to consider and review the estimates of staff as to how long particular tasks take. An example of this is in relation to *service*, as described above. Staff receive an allowance in the workload model for service, and I have asked a group of staff to indicate how many hours they spend on service. **Attachment 1** is a copy of these estimates which I have requested, with the names removed. During my time as an academic at Deakin University, I estimate my own average working week was between 45 and 50 hours per week.

23. There are different workload allocations applying to different groups of academic staff, some of whom are considered to have a higher research allocation or allowance than others, while some academics are considered to be *teaching focussed* or *teaching intensive*. In principle staff with higher levels of research activity receive reductions in their teaching allocations. However, as general rule established by management, an employee can only receive such a reduction where the employee has two out of three of *PhD students*, *research grants* and *sufficient publications*. Where an employee with an excellent record of publications who for whatever reason currently has no PhD students does not get a research grant (the success rate for which is generally below 25%), they are liable to lose their allowance for research. This arbitrary decision will often not result in the employee abandoning or reducing his or her research

effort. Rather, the research work will simply be done in the employee's "own time". Another effect is that even when academic staff periods of leave, other than lengthy long service leave, they will continue to undertake PhD supervision work while on leave because to do otherwise might result in those students being allocated to a different supervisor, with the result that by taking leave, an academic would put themselves in a position where they no longer met the employer's criteria for receiving a higher time allocation for research.

24. The workload models applicable to academic staff are provided for, though not prescribed, in Clause 15 of the *Swinburne University of Technology, Academic & General Staff Enterprise Agreement 2015*. However, as a manager, I can state that while quite clearly many managers attempt to be equitable in the distribution of workload as between individual staff members, the general level of work to be allocated within an academic unit is almost exclusively a function of available staff resources, which in turn is a function of the share of the university's total revenue which is allocated to an academic unit. Certainly as a manager, and in discussions with other managers, the question as to whether the work actually being allocated could be performed within a standard 38-hour week has never been a consideration. Given the performance expectations and work allocation within my Department, very few or no full time employees could perform their required duties to a satisfactory level within a 38-hour week, averaged over a whole year. Given the regular regime of restructuring and so-called academic "redundancies" which occur across the higher education sector, I or any other employee who decided to limit his or her working hours to 38 would without doubt significantly increase our chance of being selected for termination.

The distinction between required academic duties and working hours

25. I should qualify my statements above about estimates of actual working hours in respect of myself and other academic employees of whose work I have knowledge. What I have stated above are estimates of actual working hours – for example that I estimate that most or all academics in my Department work between 45 and 55 hours on average each week. All of that time is time where productive is being done or should be. All of those hours are legitimately described as working-time. However, it is fair to draw a distinction between *required academic work* and *all academic work*. Nearly all academic staff have *specific duties* allocated to them, explicitly or implicitly. For example, the lecturing and tutoring in a particular academic unit, or working to carry out the research required under a research grant or project, or the

supervision and assessment of Honours theses. At a more general level, employees may have to meet more or less specific *performance standards or outputs*. Examples of these might include bringing in a particular amount of grant revenue, achieving certain targets for publication (usually some combination of quality and quantity), or achieving a certain percentage of approval in student satisfaction surveys. The concepts of *specific allocated duties*, and *performance standards or outputs* are of course not mutually exclusive – much of the work done in pursuit of one is also done in pursuit of the other. The more *specific duties* which are allocated to an employee, the longer will be his or her working hours. Also, the higher or greater the *performance standards or outputs* required of an employee, the greater the work time required to meet those will nearly always be.

26. Having said all of that, there remains a proportion of *academic working hours* which can properly be described as falling into neither *specific duties* nor *performance standards or outputs*. This might otherwise be described as “non-required” work. For example:
- a. From my own experience, I have recently organised a seminar at Monash University about the sea boundary between Australia and Timor Leste. Altogether, the work associated with this was perhaps 30 hours, and it was undoubtedly related to my research work, and involved building on useful academic, government and non-government organisation contacts. This I consider to be part of my *duties* as an academic (using the term normatively) but I do not consider it to be part of my work allocation of required academic work. It is instead a reflection of my passion about the subject.
 - b. An academic might apply her advocacy and governance skills on behalf of a disadvantaged group by acting as a honorary Chair of a Board of an advocacy group for people suffering from a particular disease or condition (e.g. problem gamblers), which is also her research area. Under a particular workload model, she may be able to claim this as 10% of her workload (notionally perhaps 200 hours), fulfilling her *community engagement* service obligations to her employer. However, her work for this advocacy group might in fact take 500 hours during a year. Most of this work therefore, is part of her academic work, but it is not part of her “required work”, at least not the whole 500 hours.
 - c. A law academic may have a long-term research interest in (say) master and servant law in the American Colonies, and have spent time over 15 years slowly researching and writing a book on this subject. This work might amount to 200 hours each year, but will not fit

into the “workload model” because of its long-term nature. It is undoubtedly part of the academic’s work-time, because when the book is finally published, the university will claim it as part of its *research output*. Nevertheless, such work might in many circumstances be considered part of the employee’s required academic work.

27. Workload models and work allocations set out fairly clearly what the “required or allocated” duties or standards are. Promotion criteria also set out clearly what the performance standards are for progression through the academic structure.

Allowances for home computer use

28. It is essential to the efficient performance of my work that I use my home computer and internet connection for work purposes. In bygone days, academics had designated consultation times, during which students could come to their office and seek assistance. This has largely been replaced by email communication. I am essentially considered as part of my work to be contactable on most days and nights on every day of the week. The use of my home internet for this purpose greatly enhances the efficiency of my work, and the work of those academic and general staff I supervise, such that that access can properly be considered an inherent requirement of the job – certainly in the case of academic staff. I receive no recompense from the university in respect of the purchase or upkeep of my information technology equipment nor any contribution to the maintenance of my home internet connection.

General staff and after hours work

29. Particularly in the last year or two, there has been an occasional but increasing tendency for general staff within my general work area to contact me by email well into the evening, about work matters. It is apparent in most of these cases, by virtue of the fact that I have been sent spreadsheets or other extensive written work that these general staff have been putting in substantial time outside their paid working hours. This work is not the subject of any prior authorisation, and therefore would not qualify as overtime. I am aware that these employees, like their academic colleagues are under considerable workload pressures and often face rigid deadlines.

Attachment ML-1

Staff Member	Name 1	Name2	Name 3	Name 4	Name 5
Committee Membership				90	
Unit Management		14	23	50	
Unit Moderation	8	8	2	2	2
Unit Improvement Program			15		
Major discipline Coordinator	80	80	40		
SOL Liaison	10	10	20	10	
Accreditation	20	4			
PhD Panel Membership	15	15	15	15	15
Open Day Coordination	15	15			
Open Day Attendance	10	10	10	10	10
O-week/Marketing	10	10	10	10	10
Course Expo	10	10	10	10	10
External Engagement	75	80	30		100
Journal Editorship/Reviewing	200	20	20	200	40
Conference/Seminar Organisation	20		48		
Public Lectures/Seminars		5	4		
Projects	20	20	20		
Totals	493	287	244	257	187

*Figures in Hours